



Athlete Profile (Local)

Fred Alcon – Back After 20 Years!

It will be a reunion of sorts for Fred Alcon, a 48-year-old Army veteran from Menasha, Wisconsin. Alcon is participating in the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Milwaukee, taking place June 19-23. While he has competed in the event in the past, employment conflicts have kept him away from the multi-event national sports competition for more than 20 years. Now retired, Alcon is ready for a comeback and has signed up for the bowling, air guns and nine-ball events this year, as well as the wheelchair curling exhibition. He is anxious, he says, to get reacquainted with the old friends he hasn't seen for a very long time.

When the Games last visited Milwaukee in 1982, Alcon was a patient at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. At the time, he was recovering from a motor vehicle accident caused by a drunk driver, which left him a paraplegic. He also severed a hand in the accident that was later reattached, and reconstructive surgery helped him to regain its use. Viewing the Games that year motivated Alcon to participate himself, and he was delighted that he was able to compete himself in 1983 and 1984. Looking back, he says now that he greatly enjoyed those experiences.

A lot has changed at the Wheelchair Games since 1984. Many new sports events have been added and a lot more veterans compete each year. Some things, however, remain the same. "First-time participants will learn that the Games are a great time and a learning experience," Alcon recalls. "They'll make lots of friends and potentially even see individuals they served with. Attending the Games is a real pick-me-up, and that helps foster a positive attitude."

While serving in the military from 1977-80, Alcon was stationed in Germany. His military occupation was combat engineer, primarily serving as a truck driver. After his military service, he worked as an apprentice welder on oil rigs in Wyoming until his accident took place.

Now, Alcon is actively involved in trying to raise awareness of accessibility and accommodation issues. "Things like limited public transportation options and restaurant access, especially in smaller cities, can be very difficult for people with disabilities," he says. "Educational opportunities are outstanding, but appropriate employment opportunities need to be commensurate with that education. The National Veterans Wheelchair Games help show that individuals should be viewed for their potential and their spirit, not for being in a wheelchair."

Alcon is happy about where the Games are taking place this year. "It's great to have the Games so close to home," he says. "Participants and visitors from all over the country will be very pleased. Milwaukee is the City of Festivals, and offers so much to see and do. There are also so many activities of interest to enjoy, not only in southeastern Wisconsin but throughout the entire state."

Fred Alcon, welcome back!